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ABSTRACT

This guide presents information and ideas to help parents support their children as they grow into readers. It provides literacy-building activities that parents can use to help their children acquire a solid foundation for learning to read and mastering other academic subjects. The guide is divided by age and grade: infants and toddlers, preschool, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade. Each section includes an introduction with research-based discussion of the common literacy behaviors of the age/grade level; a list of important literacy milestones that children should be able to complete by certain age/grade; ideas and activities that can help parents help their children gain the skills needed to become successful readers; and five basic features to look for when choosing books for children. A final section presents reading room tips, explaining that reading at home should be personal, special, cozy, and fun, with the whole family involved. Suggestions for getting the most out of reading are presented (e.g., ask questions while reading and keeping a book journal). The guide concludes with a list of suggested books and a list of relevant organizations. (SM)

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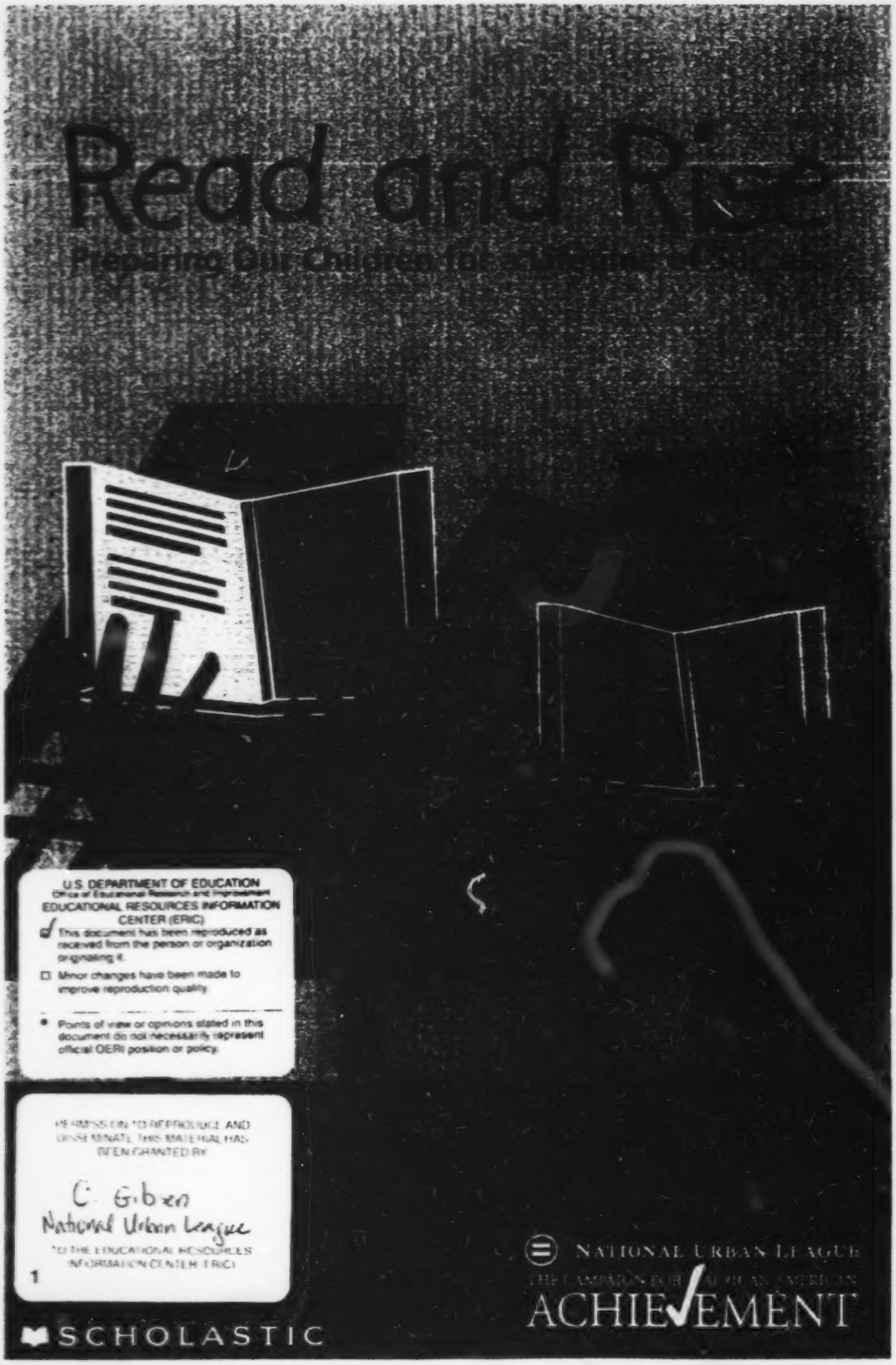
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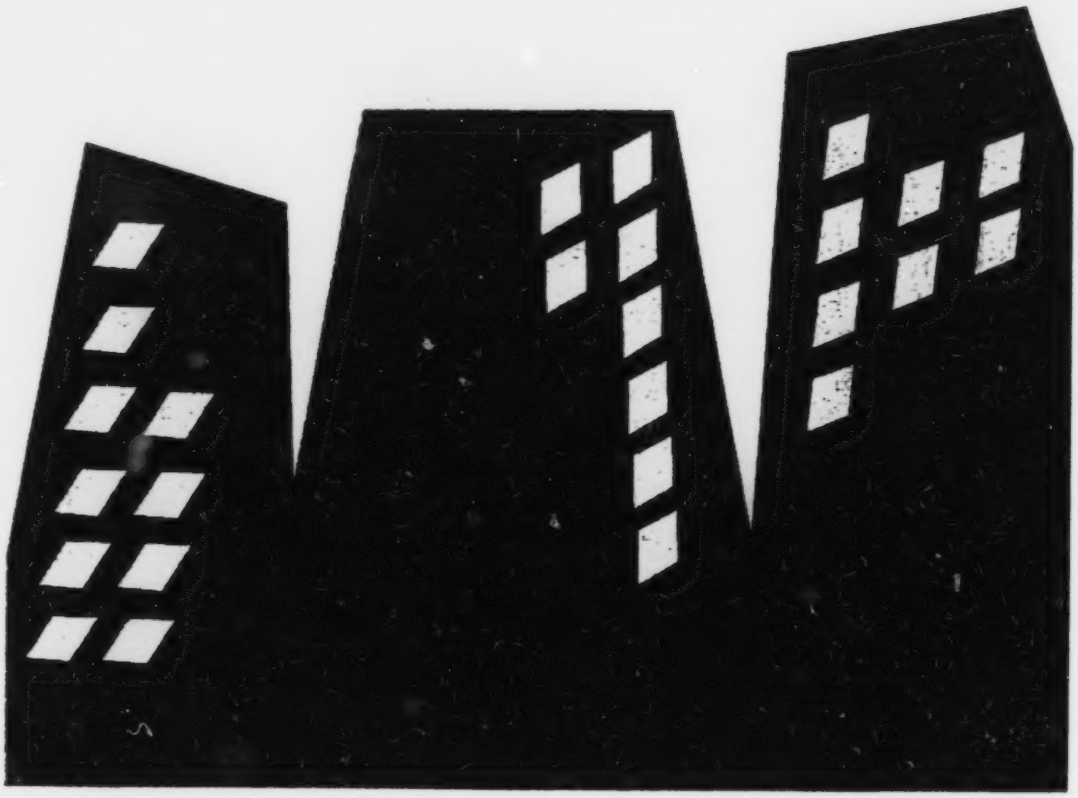

Dear Parents:

Our Children = Our Destiny. The National Urban League and Scholastic Inc. realize that parents, family members, and caregivers are critical to ensuring that our children have the necessary early literacy and pre-reading skills to prepare them to do well in school and to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We are certainly grateful that you have taken this opportunity to use our ***Read and Rise*** guide to help your child develop these skills at home.

It is vital that all youngsters read and write at grade level, or better, by the time they leave elementary school. If children can read at grade level, they are much more likely to maintain academic success during middle school and high school. Helping children develop strong literacy skills is one key way of bringing the League's "Achievement Matters" message alive.

In each of the four developmental areas outlined in the guide, parents and children will engage in literacy-building activities to help youngsters acquire a solid foundation for learning to read and then mastering all other academic subjects. The guide also includes very practical "tips" on the kinds of constructive activities that you can practice with your children at home.

The National Urban League and Scholastic are proud to share this wonderful resource guide with you so that our children experience "Literacy for Life!" Please share it with other family members and friends so that we can advance the academic growth and development of all of our children.

Sincerely,

Hugh B. Price
President & CEO
National Urban League

Richard Robinson
Chairman, President & CEO
Scholastic Inc.

Forward

Learning to read starts early—and it starts right at home.

Do you sing to your baby and make her laugh with nonsense rhymes? Do you read picture books with your toddler and talk about the pictures? When your young child comes home from school, do you talk about the events of her day—and yours?

If you're answering "Yes" to these questions, you are laying the groundwork for your child to become a lifelong reader.

Almost every child has the potential and ability to learn to read well. As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in your child's reading success.

Here are four ways that you can help bring out the natural reader in your child.

1. **Encourage your child to use language to express her feelings and needs.** Your child can only become a competent young reader and writer if she has a solid command of spoken language. So keep talking about the things you see and do and encourage her to express her ideas and feelings.
2. **Read aloud to your child.** Bedtime stories are a great place to start—but don't stop there! If you have a little time before or after dinner, or in the morning, or when your child comes home from school, share a story (or part of one). Use the time when you're waiting in a doctor's office or travelling as a reading opportunity. Keep books in your home—having lots of books available at home shows that reading is important to your family.
3. **Encourage your child to enjoy the sound of language.** You've probably noticed how much she loves rhymes, chants, and songs. It just seems to come naturally! Here's why: New research shows that these ways of "playing" with language are actually shaping her literacy development. So enjoy language with your child. Make up funny-sounding rhymes and silly words—your child will be learning as she laughs with you.
4. **Allow your child to be exposed to and experience writing.** When it's time to make up the weekly shopping list, encourage your child to help. Next time she shows you a drawing, offer to write down what it's about. Help your child to understand that she can use writing as a way to express her ideas and feelings.

Right now your child is singing, rhyming, chanting and scribbling her way toward reading. By following these steps as well as the information in this guide you will bring out the natural-born reader in your child.

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Introduction

Congratulations! You are on your way to making your child a lifelong reader. How? By going about your regular daily activities. Whether you are writing a note to Grandma, reading a bedtime story, or talking about the day's events, you are building a bridge to your child's literacy success.

Literacy is more than just being able to read and write. It is the ability to understand and communicate information and ideas by others and to others clearly and to form thoughts using reason and analysis. Literacy is an important tool for later success in life.

Research shows:

- The early childhood years, birth to age 4, are critical to literacy development.
- Reading aloud to children appears to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills needed for reading success.
- Children who are exposed to a wide range of words during conversations with adults learn the words they will later need to recognize and understand when reading.
- Studies have shown that, for children whose first language is not English, a strong base in the first language promotes school success in the second language.
- The more children know about reading, writing, listening, and speaking before they arrive at school, the better prepared they are to become successful readers.

Read on to learn how to use this guide.

Resources:
Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children: A Joint Position Statement by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association (IRA). By Susan B. Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp. (NAEYC, Washington, DC, 2000)

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children by National Research Council. Committee Co-Chairs: Catherine E. Snow and Susan Burns. (National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 1998)

How to Use This Guide

In this guide, you will find information and ideas that will help you support your child as she grows into a reader.

Young children are eager to learn. To encourage this love of learning, it is important for you to create an environment in your home that provides your child with a number of opportunities to see, hear, and use both oral (spoken) and written language.

The guide is divided by age and grade. Each section includes:

- An **Introduction**, where you will find brief, research-based information on the common literacy behaviors of the age/grade.
- A list of **Milestones**—important literacy goals that your child should be able to complete by the end of the age/grade.
- **Try This!**—ideas and activities that can help you help your child gain the skills needed to become a successful reader.
- And **Book Nook**, which presents five basic features to look for when choosing books for your child.

Please share this guide with your family and friends—it's a wonderful way to get everyone involved in your child's everyday literacy learning. If you are interested in more information on children's books or literacy learning, check out "Your Reading Room" at the end of the guide.

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Read and Rise:

Preparing Our Children for a Lifetime of Success

Written by Kia Brown
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Infants and Toddlers Birth–2 years

Infants and toddlers thrive on face-to-face interactions—leaning into a crib, cooing and telling a baby how much she is loved, or holding an 18-month-old close and playing a game of "peek-a-boo." This kind of interplay is key to your child's brain development. One of your goals as a parent of an infant or toddler is to surround your child with talk. This exposure happens naturally when you are singing a song or lullaby, reading a story, or just responding to your baby's coos, laughs, and cries.

The more words a child hears by age 2, the larger her vocabulary will grow. How? Infants and toddlers have neurons (or nerve cells) in the brain for language that are waiting to be wired in. Neuron connections are formed by activity, so the more you talk, the more connections your child has. The more connections your child has, the more vocabulary words she can absorb.

Milestones

Your infant/toddler should:

- Communicate first with gestures and expressions, then with simple sounds and words.
- Enjoy listening to stories, songs, and rhymes and playing language games.
- Learn to talk and respond to others for the pleasure of interaction.
- Love repetition or hearing the same sounds and stories over and over and over.
- Start using language to explain what she wants, ask questions, and express her feelings and ideas.

Try This!

- Talk to your child constantly!
- Give simple explanations of what is happening and what will happen next.
- Use a higher pitch and long, drawn-out vowels (for example stretch the "i" in Hi or the "o's" in Good). This helps your baby hear distinct sounds.
- Every day read aloud stories, sing songs or rhymes, and play language games to introduce your baby to the sound of words.
- Create a reading ritual, whether it is before you go to work, after dinner, or at bedtime. Find a comfortable space such as a chair, rug, couch, or bed. Draw your child close to you on your lap. This is key to making reading a lifelong habit.
- Use words she is not familiar with and explain what they mean.

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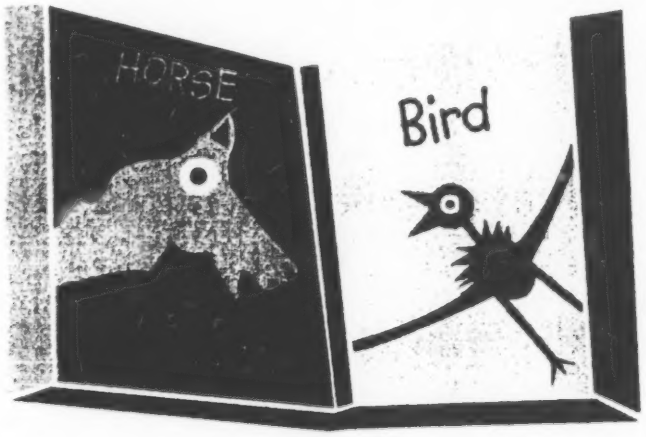
Book Nook for Infants and Toddlers

When choosing books for your infant or toddler, look for:

- Bright and familiar pictures.
- Words and features that invite participation (touch and feel and pop-up books).
- Rhythmic words that you and your child will enjoy.
- Sturdy pages made of cardboard, plastic, or washable cloth.
- Books that are the right size and shape for your infant or toddler to handle.

Look for infant or toddler books such as *Good Morning, Baby* by Cheryl Willis Hudson and *Read to Your Bunny* by Rosemary Wells.



Preschool 3–4 years

Right now your preschooler is busy learning about letters and sounds, pictures and print. You might notice her playing with language by making nonsense sounds and rhyming words, or scribbling on paper. This is great! She is exploring how language and literacy are used in her world. Now is a good time to increase your child's exposure to language and print. You don't have to look far—from the blinking red light that says "Don't Walk" to the label on a cereal box, letters, language, pictures, and print are all around us!

Reading aloud with your child for just 15 minutes a day will help her become a better reader. Why? When you read with your child, you are showing her how print "works." She is learning how to hold a book, turn pages, listen carefully, and enjoy a story. And she's beginning to understand that print has meaning.

Milestones

Your preschooler should:

- **Enjoy asking a lot of questions and talking about everything.**
- **Identify labels and signs in her environment.**
- **Know some letters (such as those in her name) and make some letter-sound matches.**
- **Understand that print carries a message.**
- **Enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks, especially her favorite ones, over and over again.**

Try This!

- **Talk to your child. Show interest in what he is saying. Play listening games with him that entail verbal clues and directions (for example: I spy with my little eye...).**
- **Label your child's books, toys, and clothes ("Jackie's shoe"). This will help her identify letters and words, especially her name.**
- **Read aloud every day, especially from books that reflect your child's culture, home, identity, and language.**
- **Provide many chances for your child to draw and print using markers, crayons, and pencils. Keep lots of paper (notepads, index cards, envelopes, construction) too!**

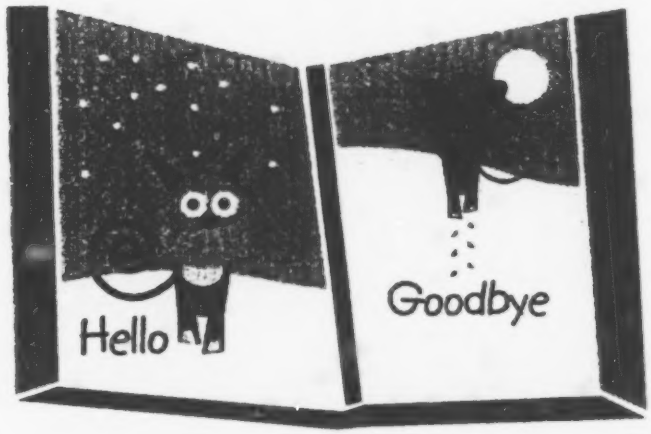
- Read around your home and community! Help your child read food labels, mail, addresses, messages, and notes. Point out signs, labels and logos in your neighborhood.

Book Nook for Preschoolers

When choosing books for your preschooler, look for:

- Simple concepts (letters, numbers, shapes, colors).
- Fun and simple plots.
- Rhythmic and sing-songy language that invites the child to join in.
- Clear, colorful, illustrations or photos.
- Animals or young children as main characters.

Look for preschool books such as *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Steven Kellogg and *I Spy Little Letters Board Book* by Jean Marzollo.



Kindergarten 5–6 years

Your kindergartner will love looking for words, especially familiar ones. She will find them everywhere—from "sale" signs to street signs, from books to buildings. You can help your child make the connection between letters and sounds in fun ways. Try leaving a message to your child on the refrigerator or place a love note in her lunch box. Writing and reading letters and notes will reinforce the power of print in a way that has meaning for your child.

Write down stories your child tells you. Why? Seeing her own feelings and ideas in print will build her reading confidence. She will also see for herself the different ways print works, such as: words are read from left to right and top to bottom and that words are separated by spaces.

Milestones

Your kindergartner should:

- **Enjoy being read to.**
- **"Read" familiar books alone, often by memory.**
- **Use language to explain and explore.**
- **Write her own name (first and last) and some high-use words (the, mom, dad, and, I, my).**
- **Know and be able to name uppercase and lowercase letters and make the connections between these letters and the sounds they make.**
- **Understand that we read English from left to right and top to bottom and be familiar with other concepts of books and print (print has meaning, spaces separate words...).**

Try This!

- **Join your local library. (Your child can help fill out her own application!) This is a wonderful way to show how reading and writing are used in everyday life. Create a special shelf, one your child can reach, for all the books you borrow from the library.**
- **Write a story together. Maybe you can start it and your child can fill in the blanks. For example, write, "Once upon a time there was a____. They told their _____ they were going to look for_____." When you're finished, your child can illustrate the story.**

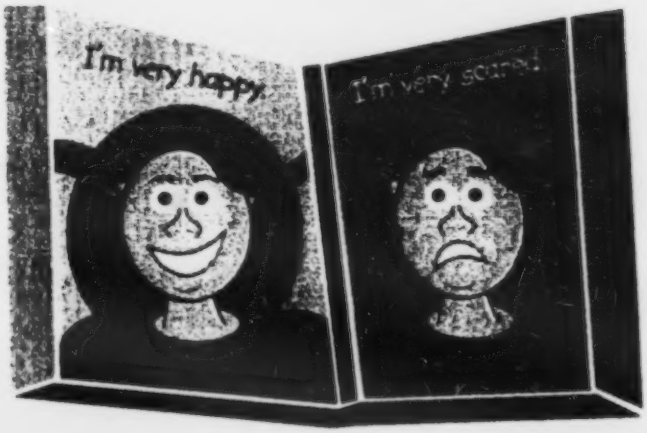
- Show your child how people use reading and writing throughout the day. Ask him to help you read and follow a recipe, write a shopping list, and go through the mail with you.
- Have conversations with your child throughout the day. Ask open-ended questions (not yes or no questions) that encourage her to discuss what she's doing, feeling, and thinking.
- Play with letters and sounds. A good start is "Riddle, riddle, ree. I see something you don't see. It starts with the letter B." Let your child guess what you see, then it is her turn to find an object for you to see.

Book Nook Picture Books

When choosing picture books look for:

- Plots that your child can relate to (friendship, going to school, family issues).
- Language that has natural rhyme and repetition.
- Plots that encourage your child to ask questions and explore his world.
- Illustrations that engage your child.
- Gold, silver, or bronze stickers that indicate the books have won awards (Coretta Scott King, Newbery, Caldecott).

Look for picture books such as *Black Cat* by Christopher Myers, *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...* by Molly Bang, and *Shades of Black* by Sandra L. Pinkney.



First Grade 6–7 years

At this very moment, your first grader is learning about the meaning of stories, pictures, words, and language. You might notice your child pointing to each word on the page while she reads aloud. This is great—your child is focusing on letters and the sounds they make. One of your goals as a parent of a first grader is to provide your child with opportunities to read a variety of books and magazines so she can practice her newfound skills. This doesn't have to cost a fortune: Join your local library, participate in your school's book clubs, or share books with neighbors, friends, and relatives.

Praise your child's reading attempts. Why? When your child makes guesses while reading, she is telling you what she is paying attention to. Saying the word "puppy" for "dog" means that your child is paying attention to the meaning of the story and using clues in the pictures. Saying "dig" for "dog" means that she is paying attention to the letters. Your child is using her own system to figure out what the story means—something that great readers do!

Milestones

Your first grader should:

- **Read and retell familiar stories in her own words.**
- **Want to engage in a variety of literacy activities (choosing books she wants to read, writing notes or stories).**
- **Use letter sounds, sentence meaning, and word parts to identify new words.**
- **Write about topics that mean something to her.**
- **Attempt to use some punctuation and capitalization in writing.**
- **Read aloud books that are on the first grade level with little difficulty.**

Try This!

- **Change your reading routine. One day read to your child. And the next day read with your child. Take turns reading each page or character. Then you can listen as your child reads to you. Let older siblings read to your first grader or ask your first grader to read to younger siblings.**
- **Invite your child to share what she is learning about writing and reading in school. Let your child pick her favorite books and display them around your home.**
- **Read nonfiction books on topics that interest your child (such as animals, transportation, or history). This will help your child develop the vocabulary she needs to talk about the world around her.**

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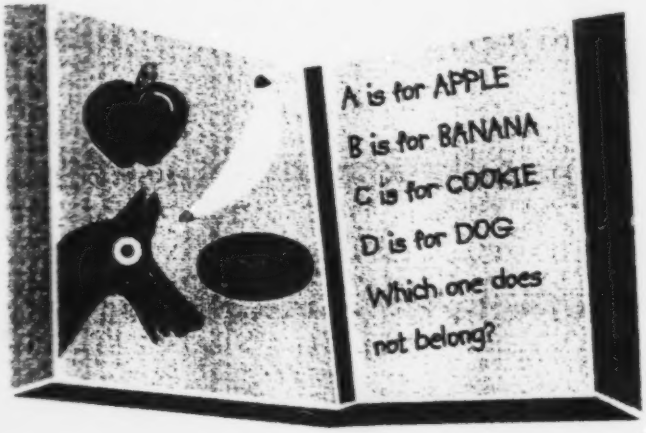
- Help your child write to a relative who lives in a different city. This is a great way not only to practice reading and writing but also to learn about family and heritage.
- Share with your child's teacher examples of what your child can do in writing and reading. Discuss any concerns you may have. Ask how you can continue your child's classroom learning at home.

Book Nook Poetry

When choosing poetry books, look for:

- Poems that stir emotions.
- Verses that play with the sounds and structure of language.
- Words that create images of the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell).
- Poems that have common or familiar themes that interest your child.
- Poems that encourage discussion.

Look for poetry books such as *Pass It On: African-American Poetry for Children* compiled by Wade Hudson and *Sing a Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems*, Beatrice Schenk deRigniers, editor.



Second Grade 7–8 years

Your second grader is becoming more aware of himself as a reader. You might hear your child reading aloud smoothly. Perhaps you can tell from his expressions that he is reading silently for meaning. One of your major goals as a parent of a second grader is to help your child read and write with greater ease and confidence. Praise your child's reading and writing efforts, allow him to pick his own books, correct his errors only when he asks for help, and be understanding if he becomes bored with a book and wants to stop reading it. This will help your second grader become a smarter, more independent reader and writer who is willing to take risks.

Look at what your child can do! Why? Your child will notice that you are paying attention to her hard work, and that will motivate your child to "improve" and refine her own reading process. If you have any concerns about what your child does not know, share them with her teacher.

Milestones

Your second grader should:

- **Enjoy reading fiction and nonfiction for interest and information.**
- **Show signs of a growing vocabulary. This includes using language rules when speaking and writing (such as using past and present correctly).**
- **Have a system that she uses when the meaning of a sentence or paragraph is not clear (such as rereading or questioning).**
- **Use common letter patterns and letter-sound relationships to spell words.**
- **Punctuate simple sentences correctly and check her own work for errors.**

Try This!

- **Talk to your child about the books he is reading. Ask him to tell you why he likes a certain book or story. Talk about the language, characters, and plot of the story.**
- **Become involved in school activities and communicate often with your child's teacher. This lets your child know you value education.**
- **Read for information. Read maps, graphs, charts, and recipes together. Learning how to read a bus schedule is an important life skill.**

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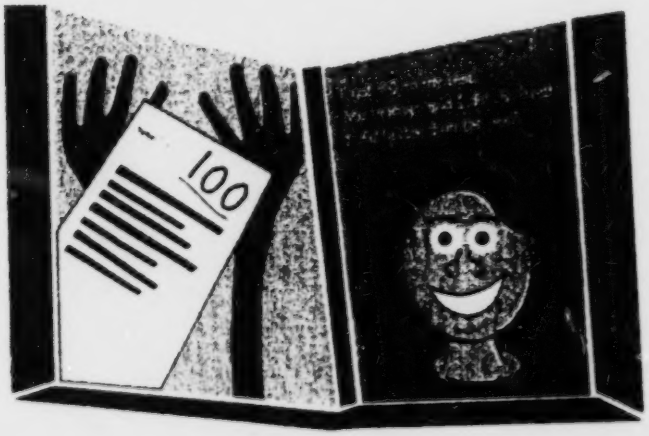
- Encourage your child to keep a journal. It could be a diary for personal thoughts, a journal in which she writes about books she is reading, or a "dialog journal" the two of you can keep, in which you "talk" to each other by writing notes.
- Let your child see you reading. It doesn't matter if it's a novel, newspaper, or entertainment magazine; it is important that your child discovers that you enjoy reading too.

Book Nook Fiction

Fiction includes the categories of science fiction, mystery, fantasy, horror, historical fiction, classics, and myths/legends/folktales. When choosing fiction books, look for:

- Books that will challenge but not frustrate your child.
- Clear and easy-to-read text (usually the print gets smaller as the book becomes more difficult).
- Stories that develop strong characters and memorable plots.
- Favorite characters, authors, and illustrators that your child has previously enjoyed.
- Books that paint a realistic view of the world and stress growing-up themes.

Look for fiction books such as *The Black Snowman* by Phil Mendez, *Little Bill* by Bill Cosby, and *You Are Special* by Max Lucado.



Third Grade 8–9 years

Chances are, your child is now reading well on her own. Reading has become a worthwhile and personally rewarding experience. She is reading different types of books—for pleasure. One of your goals as a parent of a third grader is to help your child maintain good reading habits and take responsibility for her own learning. You can do this by simply creating a space in your home where your child can comfortably read and write. Provide a place for books and reference materials such as The Scholastic Children's Dictionary, as well as basic school supplies.

Continue to read aloud to your child. Why? Children of all ages love to hear stories read aloud. Try more "mature" reading materials—newspapers, magazines, and chapter books, for instance. Reading aloud increases your child's listening comprehension and vocabulary. Ask your child's teacher or your local librarian to suggest books and magazines that are appropriate for your child's age group.

Milestones

Your third grader should:

- Read longer selections and chapter books independently for enjoyment.
- See connections between different stories.
- Be able to discuss underlying theme or message in fiction and distinguish cause and effect, fact and opinion, main idea and supporting detail in nonfiction.
- Have a rich—and expanding—vocabulary.
- Be attempting different types of writing (such as stories, reports, and poems).
- Make his writing more interesting by adding description and detail.
- Spell more words correctly by seeing how words look and using spelling rules and word parts.

Try This!

- Never stop talking with your child. Discuss his life in and out of school. Listen, seek solutions together, and soon your child will be sharing his day with you.
- Make writing a habit, an everyday activity. Suggest that your child write her life story. This will give you ideas about what she finds important. Show your approval when your child shares her "special thoughts" with you.

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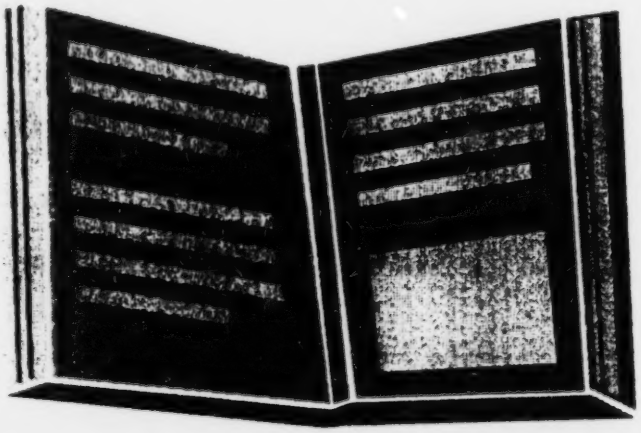
- Stay in regular contact with your child's teacher about his activities and progress in reading and writing.
- Help your child manage her reading life. Together, figure out when to read, study, play, and socialize. Remember: Reading a textbook is also an act of reading.
- Fill your home with books, newspapers, magazines, and other reading materials. When you read, talk about what you think makes for good writing and what makes you like or dislike a particular author's style.

Book Nook Nonfiction

Nonfiction includes science, history, autobiography/biography, reference and informational (cookbooks, how-to) books. When choosing nonfiction books, look for:

- Books that will challenge but not frustrate your child.
- Accurate, current information from a qualified author/editor.
- Subject matter that interests your child.
- Attractive illustrations, photographs, maps, graphic organizers, and other visual aids.
- Well-organized text that is clear and easy to read.

Look for nonfiction books such as *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* by Joy Cowley and *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges.



Reading Room Tips & Resources

Your Reading Room

Reading at home should feel personal, special, cozy, warm—and fun. We read because it's pleasurable and useful. Read books with your child that she chooses (even if you have read them over and over) and encourage her to read books she likes, independently, even if they seem too easy. Don't feel that what she reads at home has to mirror what she reads at school. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Fathers, brothers, uncles, and grandfathers need to read too! Why? A recent study reported that 40% of fathers do not read to their children. Men bring something new and valuable to the reading experience from different subject selections to different interpretations. Children need to see that reading has something to offer everybody.

Try This!

- **Do a book walk: Look at the cover and pictures in the book and talk about the story before you or your child begins reading. Discuss what you think the story might be about.**
- **While reading the book, ask lots of questions: "What is happening now?" "Why do you think the character is acting that way?" "What will happen next?" Answer your child's questions even if it means interrupting the story.**
- **If your child is not interested in the book that you are reading or he is reading on his own, put it down and pick up another one.**
- **After reading a book, ask your child questions such as: "Who is your favorite character?" "What part of the book was interesting or funny?" "Can you think of a new or different ending?" "Does this book remind you of any other books we have read?" "Would you recommend the book to a friend?" "What new information did you learn?"**
- **Keep a book journal. A younger child can draw a picture, while an older child can write down thoughts about the chapter or book. If you are reading a book together, be sure to include your own thoughts (do not correct your child's errors, this will encourage her to take risks). This is a wonderful way not only to practice reading and writing but also to keep track of all of the wonderful books you have shared.**

Reading Room Tips & Resources

Check out these books:

- ***Black Books Galore: Guide to Great African American Children's Books*** by Donna Rand, Toni Parker, and Sheila Foster (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998)
- ***Read to Me: Raising Kids Who Want to Read*** by Bernice E. Cullinan (Scholastic, 1992)
- ***Raising Lifelong Learners: A Parent's Guide*** by Lucy Calkins with Lydia Bellino (Perseus Books, 1997)
- ***Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*** The National Research Council, Susan Burns, editor (National Academy Press, 1999)
- ***Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years*** by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats (Contemporary Books, 1999)

Or contact these helpful organizations:

- Scholastic Inc. **http://www.scholastic.com**
  Scholastic Community Affairs
  (212) 343-6100
- National Urban League **http://www.nul.org**
  Education Department
  (212) 558-5300
- Reading is Fundamental **http://www.rif.org**
  National Office
  (202) 287-3220 or Toll Free (877) RIF-READ
- National Center for Family Literacy **http://www.famlit.org**
  Family Literacy InfoLine: 1-877-FAMLIT-1
- Reach Out and Read **http://www.reachoutandread.org**
  National Center
  (617) 629-8042
- First Book **http://www.firstbook.org**
  National Office
  (202) 393-1222
- American Library Association **http://www.ala.org**
  (800) 545-2433
- U.S. Department of Education: Helping Your Child to Learn to Read **http://www.ed.gov**
- The Children's Literature Web Guide **http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown**
- National PTA **http://www.pta.org**

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The National Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. Founded in 1910, the heart of the Urban League movement is the professionally staffed Urban League affiliates in more than 100 cities in 34 states and the District of Columbia. The Urban League movement carries out its mission at the local, state, and national levels through direct services, advocacy, research, policy analysis, community mobilization, collaboration, and communications.

The corporate mission of Scholastic Inc., the global children's publishing and media company, is to instill the love of reading and learning for lifelong pleasure in all children. Recognizing that literacy is the cornerstone of a child's intellectual, personal and cultural growth, Scholastic, for more than 80 years, has created quality products and services that educate, entertain and motivate children from pre-K through high school and are designed to help enlarge their understanding of the world around them.

Throughout its history, the company has recognized the importance of working with public, private and nonprofit organizations that share its mission. This commitment to social responsibility is demonstrated today by Scholastic's far-reaching partnerships to address the most critical issues facing children, parents and teachers, with a particular emphasis on reading and literacy. Scholastic Inc. is a proud supporter of the National Urban League's Campaign for African American Achievement.

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